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March 21, 1939.

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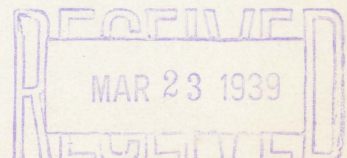
We are enclosing a copy of the article by Dr. Samuel E. Morison which appeared in The New York Times Magazine on Sunday, March 19th. This article pertains to Presidential papers in general and to the proposed repository at Hyde Park in particular.

We hope you will find it of interest.

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James T. Mathews
JAMES T. MATHEWS



George Washington

John Adams

Th. Jefferson

James

THE VERY ESSENCE OF HISTORY

By SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON,
Professor of History, Harvard University

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Herbert Hoover

Calvin Coolidge

Woodrow Wilson

Abraham Lincoln

Andrew Jackson

Theodore Roosevelt

William McKinley

Ulysses S. Grant

James Cleveland

C. A. Arthur

J. a

ONCE thick as Autumn leaves at Vallombrosa, the Papers of the Presidents have for the most part gone with the winds of house-cleaning and neglect. Some have been the victims of fire; only those of recent times have been preserved in anything approaching their one-time completeness in the White House. For it is the common fate of the papers of every President to be cleared out when he leaves. That famous cartoon of President Coolidge waiting under the White House portico for his "other rubber" might be supplemented by a picture of harassed White House aides clocking the last truck as it loads the last documents, hoping it will get away before the fateful "12 o'clock noon" on March 4—or Jan. 20, as it now is.

President Roosevelt's project for a library building at Hyde Park to house his papers and collections has aroused many questions. Where are the papers of the other thirty-one Presidents, and how much is left of them? As to some of them the question can be answered.

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON probably did not know that the Prime Ministers of Great Britain had always taken their papers home with them from 10 Downing Street; but he did the same. For the President, like the Prime Minister, has an official residence which is also his office; and in the United States only some of the State Governors have the same privilege. Franklin D. Roosevelt was one of those Governors.

When President Washington vacated the Morris house at Philadelphia, which served as Executive Mansion in the eighteenth century, all his correspondence was packed up and sent by water to Mount Vernon, where the accumulation of the war years was already housed. John Adams, vacating the White House at Washington for Thomas Jefferson in 1801, sent his to Quincy, Mass., and that Adams's action was prompted by no distaste for a successful rival is proved by the fact that the three Presidents succeeding Jefferson, all friends and members of the same party, removed their papers from the White House along with personal effects.

Nobody questioned the right of the President to do this. A gentleman's papers were his property, even if they did cover the four or eight years when he served in the highest office of the Republic. The Federal Government had no need for his correspondence, since everything in it concerning public affairs had been dealt with and filed in the appropriate department. American history could not properly be written without the President's papers, but nobody thought of that for a long time.

AS the country grew and popular education with it, and the scope of the Federal Government increased, and the Presidency came so close to the people that John Citizen began taking pen in hand

(and later dictating to his secretary) in order to offer his President a few helpful suggestions, the files of each Administration expanded to such proportions that only a fleet of trucks could move them. Thus, ancient precedent became implemented by necessity. If the Presidents allowed their documentary accumulations to remain in the White House, it would be necessary every two decades to build a new White House for the next President to live in.

After the conclusion of the second war with England, America became more conscious of herself, and confident that her independence would not be a mere Czecho-Slovakian interlude. The Federal Government then began making efforts

With Justice Washington's permission, eighty tightly packed cases of President Washington's papers were loaded on a mule wagon and started north toward Boston. En route Mr. Sparks borrowed a bale of diplomatic correspondence from the State Department and a bundle of Gates Correspondence from the New York Historical Society. Those were the happy days for historians.

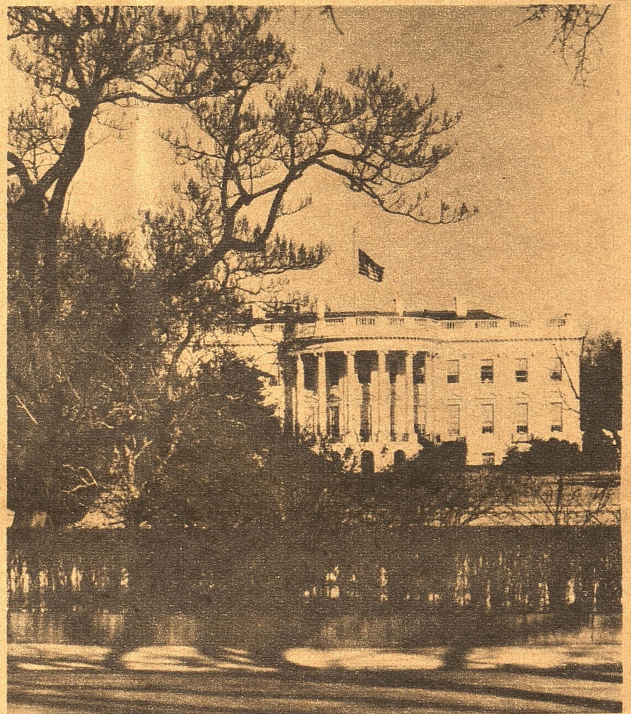
In ten years' time Sparks's "Writings of Washington" appeared, and proved a great success financially and otherwise. But in the meantime Judge Washington had died, leaving the papers to his nephew, George Corbin Washington, member of Congress from Maryland. Mr. Washington proposed to sell the "public" papers of the General to the Department of State. Legislation authorizing their purchase for \$25,000 was duly passed; but Mr. Washington, who needed the money badly—he had been defeated in the election of 1832—could not collect it all while Jared Sparks held the bulk of the papers, and Mr. Sparks was not to be hurried. Eventually 192 bound volumes of Washington papers, with several boxes of loose papers, were started on their way from Boston to the capital by the "burden cars" of the new railroad.

In 1903 the State Department turned over all its collections of Presidential papers (with the exception of some of Washington's military papers, which an overzealous adjutant general secured for his department) to the Library of Congress, which now has over 95 per cent of all the surviving papers that once belonged to the Father of His Country.

FOR the history of our constitutional beginnings by far the most important source lay in the manuscript Notes of Debates at the Federal Convention made by James Madison, and jealously preserved by him from the public eye. President Madison, fully aware of their value, left by will instructions that they were to be published after fifty years, when certain legacies (otherwise unprovided for by his estate) would be paid from the proceeds, his widow to receive the residue.

When the half-century expired in 1837, and the secret history of the Federal Convention could at last be told, Mrs. Madison (the famous Dolly) found American publishers both unpatriotic and hard-hearted in the matter of royalties and advances. Being impecunious—the normal state of Presidential widows before Congress gave them pensions—Mrs. Madison applied to President Jackson, who passed the buck to Congress. Eventually these priceless Notes of Debates were smuggled into national possession as a rider on the general appropriation bill. For another \$25,000 Mrs. Madison, in 1848, consented to part with about ninety bound volumes of her distinguished husband's papers.

Uncle Sam supposed that this was the balance of the Madison Papers, but it was not. With one collection of statesmen's papers after another the same thing hap-



Horydczak

to obtain possession of past Presidents' books and papers, in order to preserve one of the most important sources of American history.

Jared Sparks, editor of The North American Review, was first of the tribe of nosy historians who go poking about in public and private papers for the real low-down on history. Around the fiftieth anniversary of American independence, Mr. Sparks observed that no proper history of the American Revolution had yet been written; and as a means to have it written—and also as a means of legitimate profit to himself—he conceived the idea of publishing a generous selection of the letters and other writings of George Washington.

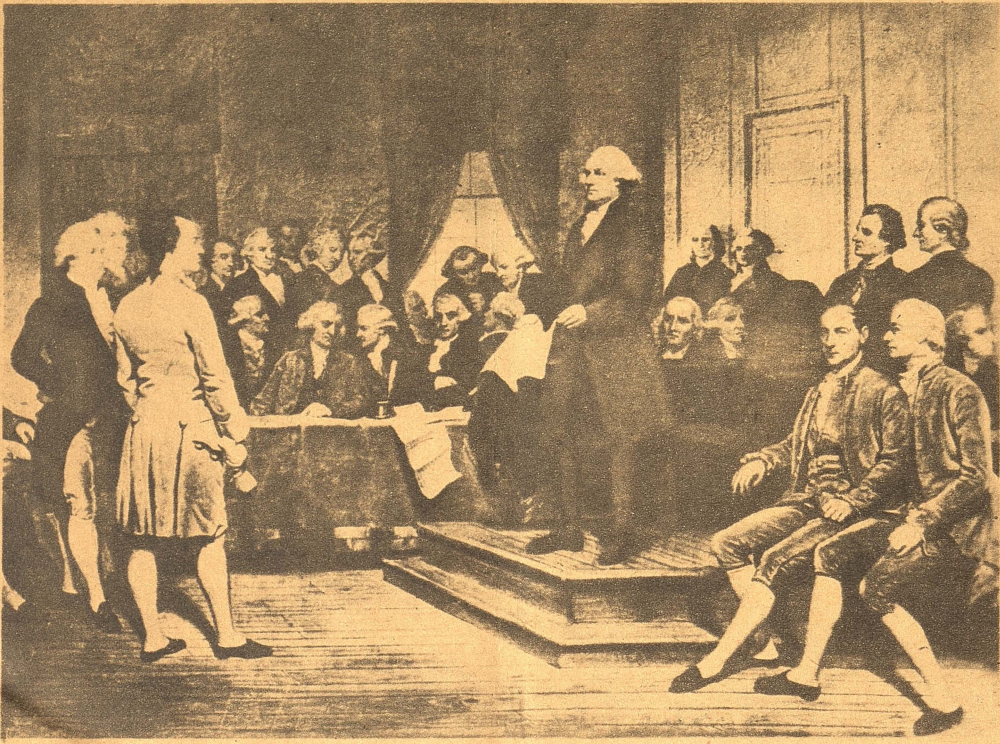
THE General's papers were still at Mount Vernon in the possession of his nephew Bushrod Washington, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. By making a flank approach on the justice through Chief Justice Marshall, the Yankee scholar obtained an agreement by virtue of which he, who as editor was to do all the work, would receive 50 per cent of the net profits. The owner, who furnished the raw material, was to have 25 per cent, and Chief Justice Marshall the balance.

Madison

James Monroe

John Quincy Adams

Andrew Jackson



Papers of Presidents Illuminate Their Eras

pens. The heirs withhold the "Private Papers" as containing only "highly confidential matters improper to divulge," or "family affairs not appropriate for public inspection." Twenty or more years later the family is ready to part with these precious heirlooms for a price; and if the government does not pay it, the papers of a President are hopelessly dispersed among autograph collectors.

Mrs. Dolly Madison bequeathed what she held back from the government to her son by her first husband; these were sold at auction in 1892, but the majority were bought in by the late Marshall Field and presented to the Chicago Historical Society. That society presented these Madison Papers, together with the diary and sundry papers of President Polk, to the Library of Congress, an act of historical comity as rare as it is praiseworthy.

AS long as no Presidents' papers were too bulky for a large attic, and remained in the hands of the Presidential heirs,

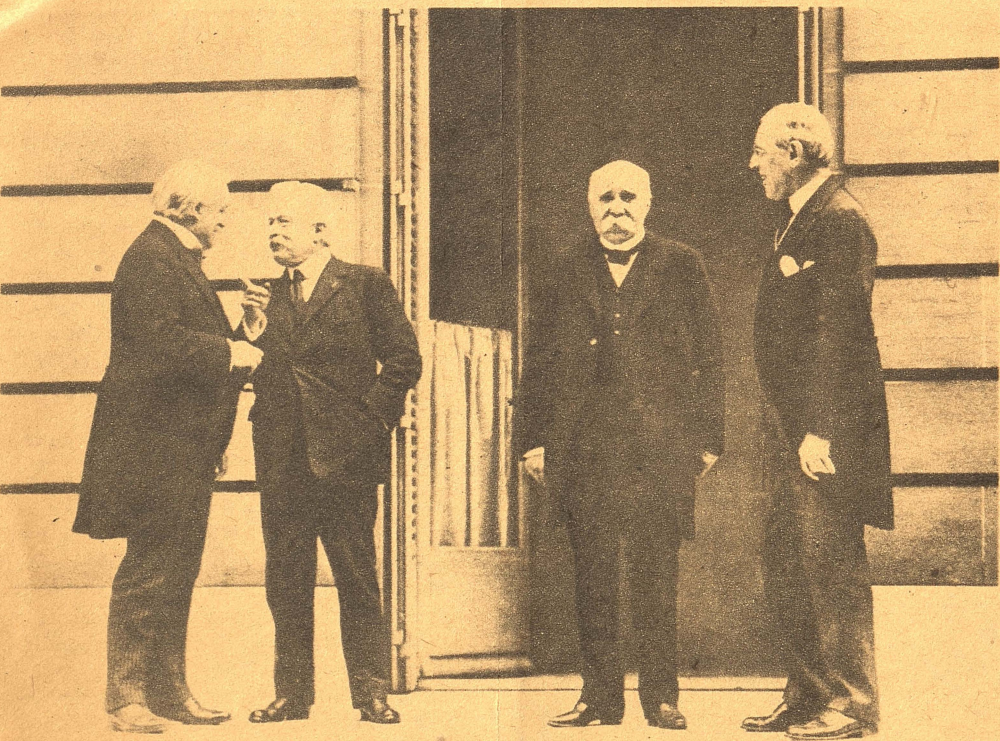
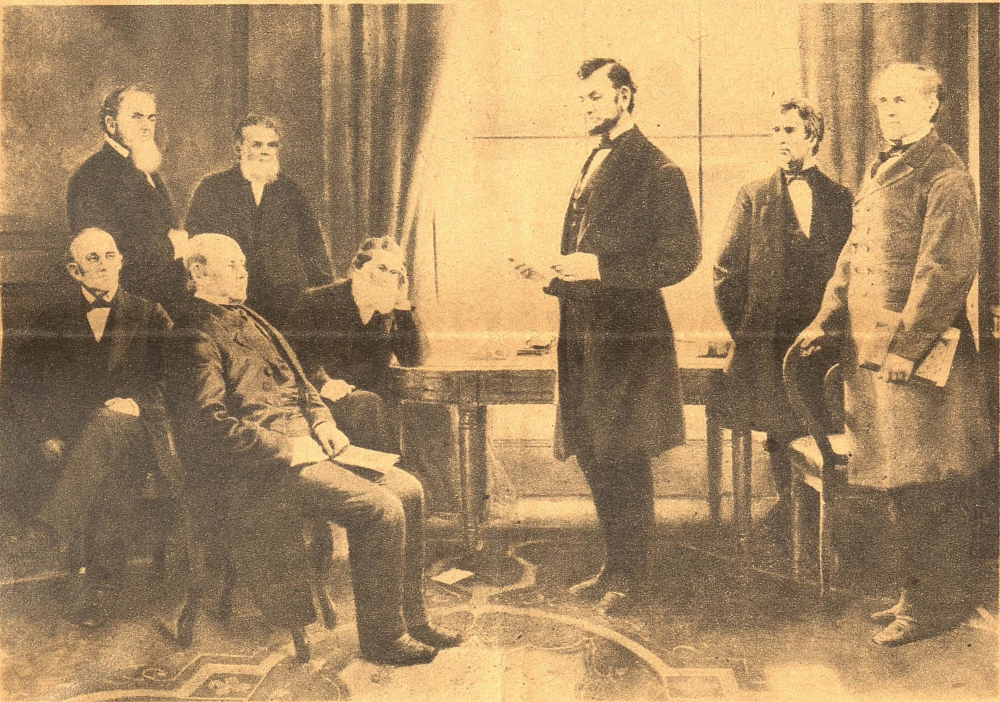
Historical days that Presidential papers illuminate—Washington at the Constitutional Convention; Lincoln and his Cabinet; Wilson at Versailles.

they were liable to all manner of dilapidation. Some were destroyed by tidy widows or careless servants, or burned by ignorant and lazy executors. It is said that President Grant destroyed his own; none are known to survive. Others, including all but a few papers of "Old Tippecanoe" (and Tyler too), were accidentally burned; the Library of Congress secured the remainder from the heirs.

Official biographers are apt to lose some papers and destroy others which they imagine will injure the reputation of their subject or create ill-feeling. Kind widows give letters away to friends or hero-worshippers; children playing in the attic on rainy days scrawl on blank pages and even cut paper dolls out of documents that register a forgotten ambition or record a political tempest. Only by the Adams family, who have always had an intelligent appreciation of the two sets of Presidential papers in their custody, and by the widows of very recent Presidents, have such collections been properly preserved in private hands.

THE Adams Papers (John, John Quincy and Charles Francis) are closed by deed of trust until 1955. The Lincoln Papers, access to which has been denied to all biographers of the Emancipator except Nicolay and Hay, are also closed for several years to come. The Coolidge papers are still in the hands of the President's widow. Mrs. Cleveland, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt and Mrs. Taft have graciously presented theirs to the Library of Congress, which, I understand, is to be the eventual depository of the Wilson Papers. In the same place are the public papers of President Garfield. These last five collections are not yet open to students.

It was the building of the new Library of Congress in 1897, the organization of its manuscript division and the administration of that (Continued on Page 22)



Wm. B. Ewing

W. A. Harrison

John Tyler

James A. Jackson

Z. Taylor

F. M. P. P. P.

F. M. P. P. P.

James Buchanan

A. Lincoln

Garfield R. B. Hayes

W. A. Grant

Andrew Johnson

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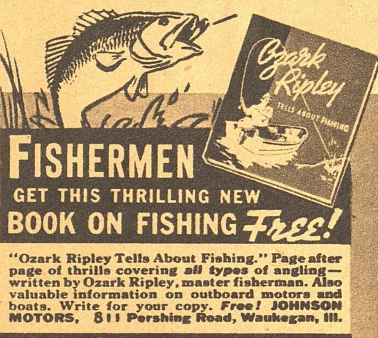
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THE ESSENCE OF HISTORY

(Continued from Page 5)

division by scholars of national reputation such as Worthington C. Ford, Gaillard Hunt, J. Franklin Jameson and St. George L. Sioussat which has induced the heirs of Presidents and other American statesmen to give up their papers.

And the Library of Congress has made every effort within its means to supplement these collections by purchase and by photostats of documents in other places. The Andrew Jackson Papers, for instance, have been given by members of the Blair family, and the Martin Van Buren Papers by three groups of heirs. Papers of Andrew Johnson were purchased from the President's grandson; and those of James K. Polk not given by the Chicago Historical Society were purchased from an adopted niece of the President. Many others are still in private hands.

As time elapses and the country grows, and mechanical means of writing are increased, and the growth of education impels people to write more and more, the sheer bulk of Presidential Papers has increased to such a point that the custody of them is a burden that no widow or other heir should be expected to carry. Mr. Hoover, the wealthiest man who ever became President of the United States, was fortunately still in a financial position at the close of his Administration to care for his own papers himself and in the grand manner. He has built the great Hoover War Library at Palo Alto, Calif., which will house not only his private and Presidential Papers but the marvelous collection of material which he made just after the World War.

The same thing, on a smaller scale, has been done by the Hayes family for the papers and collections of President Rutherford B. Hayes at Fremont, Ohio.

As a rough indication of the problem presented by the Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, let us contrast their mere bulk with that of his predecessors' papers. During President Hoover's Administration it is said (I have been unable to verify the figures) that some 600 pieces of mail came into the White House daily. The daily average has now reached 6,000. The Hayes Memorial Library contains some 75,000 pieces, or 120,000 pages of manuscript. A preliminary survey shows that the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library will have to make room for upward of 5,000 cubic feet of manuscripts and books, the manuscripts alone amounting to something between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000 sheets of typewritten paper.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S manuscripts include those relating to the many activities of his own career as Governor of New York State, Assistant Secretary of the Navy and President of the United States. In addition there are the letters, documents and other log-books of his Naval History Collection. Of printed books there is the President's private library of some 25,000 titles; of pictures, some 400 prints, engravings and paintings of naval vessels and sailing ships. There are about forty ship models, large and small, and countless gifts, souvenirs and official

tokens classed as "museum objects."

President Roosevelt became a collector at the age of 20, when he was elected librarian of the Hasty Pudding Club at Harvard. Finding an unexpended library appropriation of some \$400 he sought the advice of William H. Chase at the historic Bartlett's Book Store on Boston's Cornhill. It was Mr. Chase and not (I regret to say) any of young Franklin's professors who kindled in him the collector's ardor. "The first principle of collecting is to destroy nothing," said old Mr. Chase to young Mr. Roosevelt in the year 1902. And for thirty-six years this apt pupil has made *nihil delendum* his motto, despite the steady if despairing opposition of Mrs. Roosevelt and the White House secretaries.

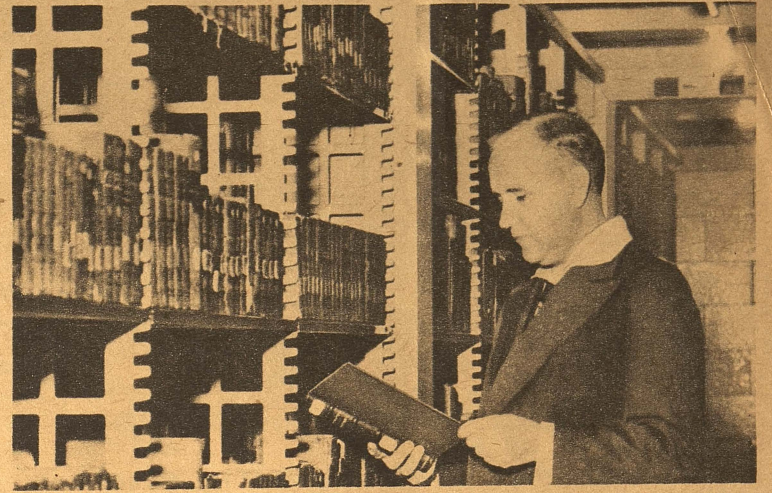
Everything has been saved, to the small boy's penny postcard requesting an autograph and the crankiest of crackpot letters. Indeed, one feature of the Roosevelt Papers is "How to Save the Country" and "How to Restore Prosperity" schemes, which at one time were coming in at the rate of six a day. And in addition to the manuscripts, books, pictures and objects there are films and stenographic notes of important conversations by telephone and otherwise.

THIS enormous collection is in a class by itself as to size, and resembles only the Rutherford B. Hayes and the Herbert Hoover collections in kind. It is much too large and varied to be housed either by the Library of Congress or the National Archives, and to break it up would be a historical error of the first magnitude. The present Administration (like it or not) covers some of the most vitally important years in American history, and no outstanding figure in any history has been documented in any such measure of completeness as is Franklin D. Roosevelt by the papers now in the White House.

Louis A. Simon, supervising architect in the procurement division of the Treasury, has in charge already the drawing of plans for a library to house all these collections at Hyde Park. It will be of two stories, in the Dutch colonial style, harmonizing with the landscape and respecting the local tradition. Under a long, sloping Hudson Valley roof, in a sort of superattic, will be stored the bulk of the Presidential and pre-Presidential papers of Mr. Roosevelt, just as they came from the White House files.

On the ground floor will be public exhibition rooms where selections from the naval pictures, ship models and mementos of the Roosevelt era will be constantly on view, a research room for students, the main library, a catalogue room, a hall for the Dutchess County Historical Society and various offices. The basement will be equipped with facilities for film storage and photographing. This library, situated on the President's estate at Hyde Park, will be a few hundred yards from the heavily traveled Albany Post Road.

Legislation is now being sought from Congress in order to enable the National Archivist to administer the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library as soon as the building is ready and the papers leave the White House. Author-



Bonney

The books Jefferson used are now in the Library of Congress—
A librarian examining the former President's volumes.

ity of the Congress will also be sought to enable Mr. Roosevelt to bequeath the Hyde Park estate, including his home as well as the library and collections, to the nation.

President Roosevelt expects to take up his residence at Hyde Park in January, 1941, and there to pass the remainder of his days. It is safe to say that the collections will not decrease during the period of his retirement. And he proposes to be on hand in order to annotate some of the important papers and to render any desired assistance to qualified students who undertake research into any phase of his Administration or any subject covered by his collections. Naturally, very many of the papers are still too "hot" to be opened to investigators, but time cools off all documentary indiscretions. Mr. Roosevelt's relation to the papers, once they are transferred to Hyde Park, will be that of a privileged interpreter and investigator, not that of owner and disposer.

IT would be difficult to overestimate the importance of these papers. Very few aspects of national life from 1935 to 1941 will not be illuminated by them. On the official acts of the government they are supplementary rather than exclusive; for any letter or other document addressed to the President which requires action, investigation or comment is sent to the proper department or official, and will eventually find its way into the National Archives at Washington. Only a record or digest of it is filed with the President's Papers.

This part of the papers, which will probably bulk a good half of the whole, will all be duplicated at Washington; but the advantage of not concentrating all records of the nation's past in one place is evident. There are many thousands of letters and reports respecting the new relief and other governmental agencies started since 1933, which still repose in the President's Papers because no other bureau was ready to file them. There are highly confidential personal letters from or relating to public officials of the United States at home and abroad, many of them in longhand, and of which no other copy exists. The main personal impulses to many important events must be sought by historians here.

Behind individuals lurk the vast, often blind forces that impel statesmen to new expedients and experiments. The waves of social and economic life have been beating upon the White House these ten years past, as never before, and the President's files have become a sort of clear-

ing house of information about "The State of the Union." Innumerable reports on business and other conditions, of rural distress and urban misery during the great depression, and of recovery after, are filed in the Papers of the President, or of Mrs. Roosevelt, who has a substantial archive of her own, also destined for Hyde Park.

THE President's principle of destroying nothing means that his library will be a storehouse of information on the homeliest and most popular aspects of American life during these eight momentous years. The historian of the TVA, of Warm Springs, of America's relation to the Munich pact, will have to come there; but the historian of the common things of life will benefit as well. For instance, suppose some one writing the story of American folk art in A. D. 3000 wishes to know what manner of Christmas greetings Americans exchanged in 1938. He will find his curiosity gratified in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, where every one of the tens of thousands of Christmas cards sent to the President will be neatly filed.

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